

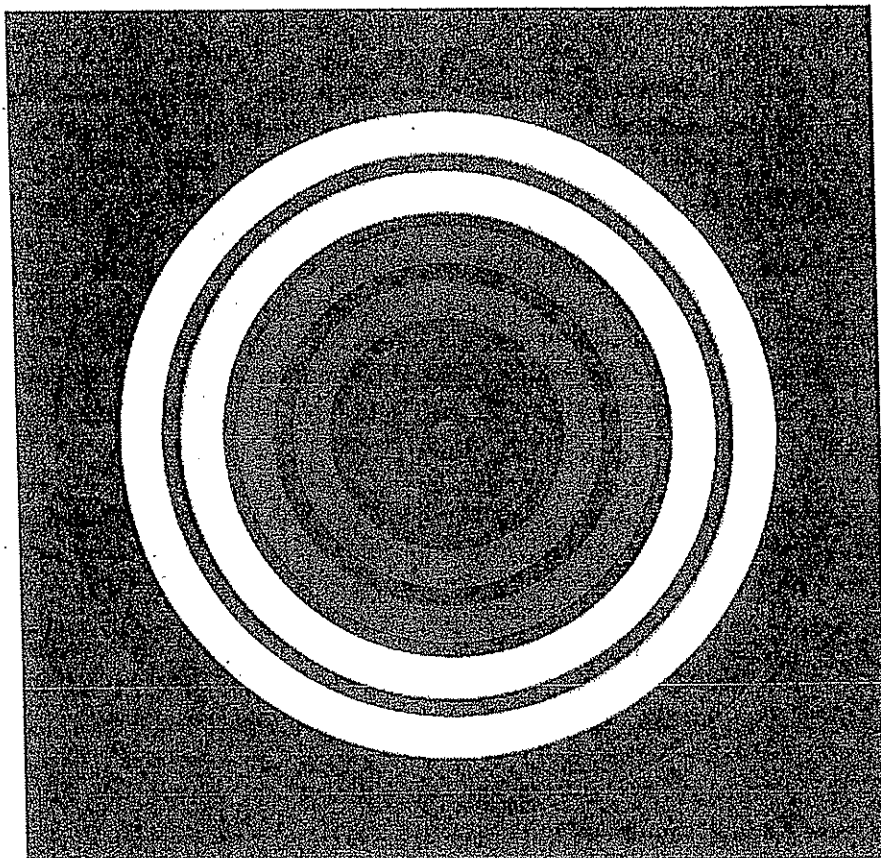
LOUDOUN COUNTY POVERTY SYMPOSIUM  
"CUTTING POVERTY IN HALF"  
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# **Handout 3**

(Presentation by Jodie Levin-Epstein)

# TARGETING POVERTY:

## Aim at a Bull's Eye



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**CLASP**  
CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY

## Targeting Poverty: Aim at a Bull's Eye

### BACKGROUND

For the past few decades, “poor” has been nothing more than a four-letter word. Not since President Lyndon Johnson proclaimed a War on Poverty in 1964 has there been a commitment by American leaders to address poverty. Political energy has focused instead on ending not poverty but welfare.

Now, political commitments to tackle poverty may be reemerging around the country; government initiatives and leadership from both parties suggest that the pendulum is swinging anew. Connecticut state law calls for cutting child poverty in half, and Republican Governor Jodi Rell’s budget director is responsible for its implementation. The bipartisan U.S. Conference of Mayors has created a Taskforce on Poverty and Opportunity. In Louisiana, Democratic Governor Kathleen Blanco established the Solutions to End Poverty initiative even before Hurricane Katrina struck. And in the U.S. Senate, a bill has been introduced that sets a target to cut child poverty in half within a decade.<sup>1</sup> As policy makers and candidates seek to distinguish themselves in the coming years—in this richest of nations with persistently high levels of poor people—more efforts that squarely seek to put a poverty agenda on the map may emerge.

Tackling poverty is not easy. Poverty is driven both by economic forces the nation faces and by the capacity of individuals and families to function effectively. Solutions are elusive, in part because the right mix of programs and policies needs to be calibrated in a constantly changing environment. A critical first step, therefore, is establishing the political will to make poverty a priority mission.

Targets establish a clear vision for tackling the poverty problem. Targets set a timetable for the elimination or reduction of poverty and measure accomplishments against these goalposts. A target does not determine *how* the mission gets accomplished, but it does set forth a commitment to get the job done. A new generation of political activity is emerging, one in which poverty targets and related efforts are considered a first and vital step in tackling poverty.

**Targeting Poverty: Aim at a Bull's Eye** considers:

- *why* poverty is reemerging as a political issue;
- *how* poverty is a “purple” rather than a red or blue state issue;
- *what* the picture of poverty looks like in the U.S.; and,
- *where* poverty targets and related efforts are underway.

## WHY POVERTY IS EMERGING ON POLITICAL AGENDAS

There are many potential explanations for the re-emergence of U.S. poverty on political agendas. Here are some:

- **The poor are newly visible.** In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina gave a face to poverty in the U.S. As President Bush said in the aftermath of Katrina, "All of us saw on television there's...some deep, persistent poverty in this region...We have a duty to confront that poverty with bold action." Americans have always been aware of poverty in our midst. But after Katrina, more of us—nearly half—view the nation as one of haves and have-nots.<sup>2</sup>
- **More people are poor.** Since 2000, the poverty rate has increased, undoing many of the gains from the strong economy of the 1990s. There were over 5 million more poor people in the U.S. in 2005 than in 2000—an increase of 1.4 percentage points.<sup>3</sup>
- **More people fear falling into poverty.** Asked if they are concerned that they will be poor at some point in their lives, 63 percent of those polled in 2005 said yes—compared to 49 percent in 2000. And this anxiety is not limited to those with low incomes: Nearly 60 percent of people who are not now low-income are worried that they will become poor.<sup>4</sup> Making ends meet is a challenge not just for the poor but for an increasing share of Americans.
- **The gap between rich and poor has gained the attention of the Administration.** U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson has announced that this gap is one of his top four economic agenda items, a statement that positions income inequality front and center. While the income gap is not new, the *Christian Science Monitor* recently observed that it "may be growing in importance for America's long-term economic health. A sharp rich-poor divide augurs poorly for achieving the political unity needed to keep the nation on solid economic footing."<sup>5</sup> And, while a focus on inequality does not necessarily mean a focus on poverty—a nation of only millionaires and billionaires also has an income gap—one way to shrink the gap is to reduce poverty. Among 28 developed nations, the gap between the rich and the poor in the U.S. is second only to Mexico.<sup>6</sup> A low-income U.S. household (10th percentile) has less than 40 percent of the income of the median household.
- **Poverty policy is increasingly globalized.** International efforts—such as the Millennium Development Goals—have engaged rich nations, including the U.S., in helping to meet poverty targets in the poorest nations. Specifically, a goal has been set to halve by 2015 the number of people living on less than a dollar a day.<sup>7</sup> Poverty in the poorest nations is much deeper than that of the rich nations. Still, the global community is attentive to how developed countries treat their poor.

Notably, UNICEF's Child Poverty in Rich Countries 2005 found that the child poverty rate in the U.S. stands second only to Mexico as the worst among the world's richest nations.<sup>8</sup> UNICEF asserts that "Allowing the kind of poverty that denies a child the opportunities that most children consider normal is a breach of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* to which almost all OECD countries are committed."<sup>9</sup>

- **Poverty is also understood as too expensive for society.** Poor individuals and families bear the brunt of poverty. At the same time, the economic costs to society go beyond the direct costs of services for those who are poor. For every one-point increase in the poverty rate, cities spend \$27.75 per capita more on non-poverty-related services.<sup>10</sup>

## POVERTY IS PURPLE

Putting poverty on a political agenda is a purple thing to do. Poverty is not divided among the red (Republican) and blue (Democratic) states. It is everywhere; poverty is a state of purple.<sup>11</sup> Poverty is "owned" by Members of Congress and Governors in both parties. For example:

- In the House, of all districts with poverty rates greater than 20 percent, more than 80 percent of them are Democratic.
- In the Senate, of the 10 states with the highest poverty rates, 70 percent of Senators are Republican.<sup>12</sup>
- Only 20 Congressional districts have poverty rates below 5 percent; all are currently represented by Republicans.<sup>13</sup> But these enviable districts are not immune to higher poverty areas. In Georgia's 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional district, where the poverty rate is a dramatically low 4.5 percent, poverty rates of 9 percent or higher prevail in 13 census tracts (of nearly 100).<sup>14</sup> Twenty census tracts have a child poverty rate of more than 9 percent, including three census tracts where one of every five children lives below the line.
- Of the ten states with the highest child poverty rate, six have Republican and four have Democratic Governors.<sup>15</sup>

Americans believe that poverty should be addressed.<sup>16</sup> Clear majorities of all political groups except conservative Republicans support more generous government aid to fight poverty—there is common ground among Democrats, Independents, and moderate and liberal Republicans.<sup>17</sup>

## A PICTURE OF U.S. POVERTY

The United States, the richest nation in the world, is home to a growing number of poor people.<sup>18</sup> In the U.S.:

- **37 million people live in poverty.** More than one in eight persons is poor. If all the people living below the poverty line lived in one state, it would be the biggest state in our nation. The 37 million is also greater than the combined population of Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Montana, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming.
- **The poverty rate has increased in recent years.** Between 2000 and 2004, it climbed from 11.3 to 12.7 percent. The 2005 data show no statistical improvement in the poverty rate (12.6 percent). In contrast, from 1993 to 2000, the poverty rate declined.
- **13 million children live in poverty.** More than one in six children under the age of 18 is poor.
- **Children are worse off than older populations.** The 2005 poverty rate for children was 17.6 percent; the overall rate was 12.6 percent.
- **Very young children are worse off than older children.** One in five children under the age of six lives in poverty.
- **16 million people, including 6 million children, live in extreme poverty.** Fully 43 percent of the poor live in extreme poverty – below 50 percent of the federal poverty level. More than one in 20 persons and nearly one in ten children in the U.S. live at this level of deprivation.

Work, including full-time work, too often fails to lift workers out of poverty:

- More than 9 million workers live in poverty.
- Nearly 3 million workers live in poverty despite working full time and year round. This is equal to the combined population of San Francisco, Milwaukee, Boston, Washington D.C., and Atlanta; or of Delaware, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Montana.
- Part-time status is often involuntary. Of the 23 million part-time workers, one of every five has this status involuntarily, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. More than one of three part-time workers would rather work full-time according to the Families and Work Institute, which found that typically it is low-income workers who work part-time involuntarily.<sup>19</sup>
- Many jobs pay low wages. In ten different states, more than 30 percent of jobs pay wages that result in an annual income below the federal poverty level.<sup>20</sup>

Work too often fails to protect families against poverty and low-income status:

- About 2.5 million working families have incomes below the poverty level.<sup>21</sup>
- Six million children—approximately half of all children in poverty—live in working families.
- Child poverty in working families has increased dramatically in the Midwest. More than 400,000 children in working families entered poverty between 2000 and 2004—a timeframe during which poverty rates among children with *nonworking* parents actually declined.<sup>22</sup>
- More than 9.2 million working families are low-income, a designation that includes those living in poverty as well as those at less than 200 percent of the poverty line. Almost one-third of all children living in working families are low-income.<sup>23</sup>
- Furthermore:
  - 55 percent of children in low-income families—15.9 million—have at least one parent who works full time, year round;
  - 27 percent of children in low-income families—7.8 million—have at least one parent who works part time or full time for part of the year; and
  - 19 percent of children in low-income families—5.5 million—do not have an employed parent.

Poor families in the U.S. experience clear hardships:

- *Food insecurity.* Limited access to enough food is the experience of more than one of every three households below the poverty line. Food insecurity is not limited to those under the line: One of every eight households and one of every six households where children reside experience this hardship.<sup>24</sup>
- *Health.* A recent study found that babies raised in food insecure households are more likely to suffer poor health, sometimes resulting in hospitalization.<sup>25</sup> While people who live in poverty are not the only ones who lack health insurance coverage, 37 percent of the uninsured are poor, and most of them (55 percent) have a worker in the home.<sup>26</sup>
- *Housing.* The rising cost of housing is putting a squeeze on many families; however, for poor families the consequences are dramatic and can include homelessness and hunger. For example, one recent study found that, in the winter, poor families make up for higher heating bills by cutting their food spending by a similar amount.<sup>27</sup>

The poverty definition is increasingly viewed as inadequate, and many experts have gravitated towards using the term “low-income” in discussions of struggling families. The poverty definition was developed in the 1960s and relies on outdated methodology. Many experts consider the level of income that results to be too low.<sup>28</sup> Some analysts embrace a self-sufficiency standard—a much higher threshold—as a more accurate measure of what a family needs to survive without significant public or private assistance.<sup>29</sup> Thus the official poverty numbers noted above do not necessarily capture the full picture of struggling families.

## WHERE POVERTY TARGETS HAVE EMERGED

Increasingly, targets that include timelines and numerical goals for reducing or eliminating poverty are being seen as a first step in tackling poverty. Policy makers are asking how far we want to get and how fast we can get there even before determining the means to achieving the ends.

Poverty targets make a difference. One central way they do this is by grabbing government attention. In the U.K., the Blair government announced in 1999 a commitment to end child poverty by 2020 and to cut it by one-quarter by 2005. Lisa Harker, who recently was appointed to head up this commitment, notes that “The numerical targets have been critical in ensuring that the pledge to ‘eradicate child poverty in a generation’ is more than an aspiration. [The targets] have been crucial benchmarks to inform policy deliberations in the key government departments.”<sup>30</sup>

When the first goalpost found child poverty down 20 rather than 25 percent, the political resolve of the government was not diminished but strengthened. “The government has acknowledged that it has failed to reduce child poverty by a quarter,” says Harker, “and on current trends it will fail its next target. There is no doubt that it needs to move up a gear, and asking me in to scrutinize and challenge its policy on child poverty is an indication that it is not going to renege on its commitment.”<sup>31</sup> It is notable that, over the same period of time during which the U.K. targeted child poverty and reduced it by nearly 20 percent, the U.S. child poverty rate increased by about 12 percent.<sup>32</sup>

Targets to end or reduce poverty provide a means of measuring impact; they also can mobilize the public. “Child Poverty in Rich Nations 2005” specifically recommends that OECD countries “set credible targets to reduce child poverty and build public consensus behind the achievements of those targets.”<sup>33</sup>

A target is a solid first step in addressing poverty. But if the endgame is to reduce or eliminate poverty, the target *numbers* must motivate public *policies* that can achieve them. The target informs the policy—it lets leaders and the public know whether the game has been won or lost and whether particular policy approaches, new or old, are effective.



## WHAT'S BEING DONE

The following lists federal, state, and local government efforts that set or support poverty targets:

### Congress

- Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) introduced “The End Child Poverty Act” as an amendment to the President’s 2005 budget. The target and timeline would halve child poverty within a decade and fully eradicate it as soon as possible. A Child Poverty Elimination Board would be charged with developing a plan to accomplish the target. The President would then review the Board’s plan, issue his own, and begin implementation of specific measures to reach the goal of halving child poverty within ten years. In addition, in order to fund the plan, the Act (S. 1084) would enact a one percent surtax on individuals whose adjusted gross income exceeds \$1 million, providing for the creation of the Child Poverty Elimination Trust Fund. While the original amendment was defeated, Sen. Kennedy reintroduced the “End Child Poverty Act” on April 4, 2006; the measure (S. 2504) has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee.
- On September 7, 2005—a week and a half after Hurricane Katrina made landfall—Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) introduced legislation to renew the commitment of the nation’s leaders and government to “improve the lives of the 37,162,000 Americans living in poverty and the 15,600,000 of those who live in extreme poverty.” The legislation calls on the President to present a plan for eradicating poverty by 2010. To date, Representative Lee’s resolution has gained 63 cosponsors and has been referred to the House Committee on Government Reform.
- Rep. Lee also has introduced the “Poverty Impact Trigger Act of 2005,” which would require poverty impact statements. Under the act, no bill or joint resolution which appropriates \$10 million or more may be considered unless the “committee report accompanying the bill or joint resolution includes a CBO Poverty Index Division impact statement.” Currently, this legislation has 15 cosponsors and has been referred to both the House Committee on Rules and the House Committee on the Budget. While poverty impact statements do not actually set a target, they could be an important tool in assessing alternative approaches to *meeting* a target.

### States

- **Connecticut:** State law sets a child poverty timeline and target: Child poverty is to be reduced by 50 percent in the decade between 2004 and 2014. Connecticut’s legislature established a Child Poverty Council in 2004 and charged it with recommending strategies to meet this target. New legislation merges this Council and another into a single Child Poverty and Prevention Council. Connecticut Governor Jodi Rell signed the integrated Council’s measure into law in June 2006. The new Council must advise the Governor and legislature on how to realign the state’s budget to ensure that it is compatible with reducing child poverty. The Council also must issue annual reports highlighting the progress the

state is making toward its goal of halving child poverty. These reports will include an update on the Governor's budget, the poverty and prevention reports from other state agencies, and further recommendations on how to reduce and prevent child poverty.

- **California:** More than one of every seven poor children in the U.S lives in California.<sup>34</sup> The 2006 legislature passed a measure that would provide a timeline and target to halve child poverty by 2016 and eliminate it entirely by 2026.<sup>35</sup> In October 2006—a week after signing into law a historic initiative setting a target for global warming—the Governor vetoed the child poverty bill. While the global warming bill left all details to the process of regulation, the Governor's veto statement noted that the child poverty bill “does not provide solutions to end child poverty, but rather is a policy statement more appropriately made in a resolution and considered through annual budget hearings.”<sup>36</sup> The bill establishing a child poverty target would also have required the Department of Finance “to report to the Legislature on how the Governor's budget proposal will impact the state's goals of reducing child poverty.” The Legislative Analyst's Office would then have been required to include this information in its report of the Governor's proposed budget, allowing legislators to evaluate how the Governor's budget would affect child poverty before voting on it.
- **Minnesota:** A 2006 law provides for a three year legislative Commission to End Poverty in Minnesota by 2020. The bi-partisan measure established an 18 member Commission that will be appointed by the legislative leadership and will also include two non-voting members to be appointed by the Governor. Funding already has been appropriated for operations in year one. Tasks include developing a consensus on strategies that achieve clear goals and enjoy bipartisan support. The legislative language calls upon the Commission to be guided by a set of principles one of which notes that “All people need to work together to overcome poverty, and this work transcends both any particular political theory or party and any particular economic theory or structure.”<sup>37</sup>
- **Vermont:** State Senator Matt Dunne, the City of Burlington, and Democracy for America have partnered to initiate dialogue about Vermont's “fight to eradicate poverty.” The three hosted a conference in mid 2006. They agree that reducing poverty by 50 percent over a 10-year period is a useful organizing principle but have not decided whether to try to incorporate this target into legislation. The partners expect to continue to develop the conference's ideas and actions in 2007.<sup>38</sup>
- **State Benchmark Systems:** Some states have adopted benchmarking systems to report on progress in a variety of areas, from the state's economy to its environment; at least a few states include benchmarks on poverty. For example,
  - **Oregon's** Progress Board releases a report each year demonstrating both how the state's poverty rate has fluctuated and how poverty in Oregon compares to the rest of the U.S. and neighboring states. The latest report indicates that the current overall poverty rate has “hovered” around the target since 1993. However, child poverty rates have worsened. (There is no target set for child poverty per se.)<sup>39</sup>
  - **North Carolina's** Progress Board set a 2020 target by which 90 percent of children would live above the poverty line; according to the latest report,

82 percent of children meet this criterion. This level has remained fairly constant since 1994, but this is enough to improve North Carolina's regional ranking.

- **Maine's** benchmark establishes that the overall poverty rate should decline and remain below the U.S. rate through 2010. The latest report notes that "Maine's poverty rate is rising and thus moving away from the benchmark."<sup>40</sup>

Other states may have implemented or may be developing benchmark systems that include poverty targets. While benchmarks do not necessarily set a timeframe for reaching a particular target, they do provide a means for which both political leaders and the public can measure progress related to poverty.

### Cities

- **New York** – In New York City, a Commission for Economic Opportunity issued recommendations that call for the city to set poverty goals and metrics. The September 2006 report asserts, "*It is our fundamental conclusion that poverty in New York City can be reduced.* Exactly how large that reduction will be depends on a number of variables, including the critical role of federal and state policies outside the City's control. Yet, if firm commitments are made, if specific goals are identified and measurements for progress spelled out, if accountability is built into the decision-making process, *we are confident the reduction in poverty can be significant.*"<sup>41</sup>

The Commission was established by Republican Mayor Michael Bloomberg and began its task in March 2006, under the direction of Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs. It consists of thirty-two individuals from different sectors—government, business foundations, and nonprofit—and exists to create cross-sector, public-private solutions and to devise a coordinated, citywide initiative to reduce poverty.

It is not surprising that setting poverty targets is a part of the Commission's recommendations. Asked about the significance of setting poverty targets, Gibbs asserted, "I really firmly believe that you're not going to make progress on an issue like this unless you set those kinds of targets. The commitment to taking action is just made more tangible by everybody who needs to be involved in the success."<sup>42</sup>

### Related Developments

The following lists major efforts that, while not setting numerical targets, explicitly identify the need to tackle poverty; it also includes non-governmental initiatives with numerical targets:

- **Louisiana** – Even before Katrina struck, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco made poverty a priority. Early in her tenure, she asserted that "We've tolerated poverty for too long. It's become so much a part of our existence that I'm afraid that many of us have decided that there's really not much we can do about it."

But ... poverty is simply too expensive. We can't afford it."<sup>43</sup> As a first step, Governor Blanco hosted the "First Annual Solutions to Poverty Summit" in May 2005. Soon thereafter, she established by executive order the Louisiana Solutions to Poverty (SToP) Network Council. The purpose of the SToP Network Council is, among other things, to evaluate current laws and regulations and determine their impact on poverty reduction; to develop the *Louisiana Roadmap to Fighting Poverty*, with indicators of the success of particular strategies; and to propose and implement initiatives aimed at reducing poverty. State agencies are charged with outlining "the deadline for poverty reduction indicators." A bill signed into law by the Governor codified the appointment of various agency staff to coordinate efforts around SToP. Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on reducing poverty at the local level, so SToP state officials established local coalitions in each of the state's 64 parishes to engage local citizens in efforts to address poverty.<sup>44</sup> In 2006, the work on SToP continues; so far, 131 community coalition meetings have been held to identify local solutions aided by 144 Louisiana citizens trained to lead local coalitions. A college campus initiative spearheaded by 25 student leaders seeks to grow student membership in the SToP initiative to 250 by 2008.

- **Miami, FL** – The 2000 U.S. Census showed Miami to be the poorest large city in the U.S. In response, Mayor Manny Diaz and the city of Miami launched a \$2-million Anti-Poverty Campaign in 2002. The initial campaign used city funds to increase awareness about the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit and to make micro-loans to small businesses. The Mayor's Office continued to work with partners in the city to find ways to reduce poverty and, in 2005, expanded the Anti-Poverty Campaign with the creation of ACCESS Miami. Under ACCESS Miami, the city has held job fairs and a literacy campaign and has attempted to form more public-private partnerships that improve services for low-income residents. Even though Miami did not set a poverty reduction target, the collaborative efforts focused on poverty have led to a sustained decrease in the poverty rate since 2002.
- **Fresno, CA** – In late 2005, the City Council of Fresno approved the creation of a poverty task force. In an attempt to involve all aspects of the city government, the task force will address the most critical problems associated with high poverty concentrations, such as insufficient affordable housing, high crime rates, inadequate public education, and a lack of job training.<sup>45</sup> The City Council of Fresno, rather than setting a particular poverty target, has taken a concerted approach to reducing high concentrations of poverty. According to a recent Brookings Institution report, Fresno had a higher proportion of poor people living in areas of concentrated poverty than did any other major U.S. city.
- **Milwaukee, WI** – Recently, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett has taken action to fight poverty by assembling 12 local leaders to serve on an Anti-Poverty Commission. Mayor Barrett hopes that these 12 individuals—representing business, labor, education, and social services—will develop tangible action plans to reduce poverty in the city, which currently stands at 26 percent. While the Commission is still in its early stages, it has already hosted community engagement meetings and held a forum featuring national and local poverty experts, who helped to identify the causes of poverty in Milwaukee and suggested possible solutions.<sup>46</sup>

- The U.S. Conference of Mayors has set up a Task Force on Poverty and Opportunity. Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa serves as chair. At the inaugural meeting of the task force on January 26, 2006, Villaraigosa stated that he hopes the mayors can draw from their collective experiences to create pragmatic solutions to reduce urban poverty, solutions that can be enacted as federal policy.<sup>47</sup> In early June, after the third meeting of the poverty task force, Villaraigosa said that he and several other mayors, concerned that poverty was not on the agenda of national political leaders, planned to travel to Washington to voice their concerns. Villaraigosa said, “We want to put this on the agenda in a bipartisan way...Neither Democrats nor Republicans have been talking about poverty for a very long time.”<sup>48</sup>
- The National League of Cities manages the Municipal Action to Reduce Poverty Project. The project has launched an effort to tell the story of ten cities’ efforts, stories that “illustrate the ways in which city leaders can develop and use equity agendas to make city hall a driving force for ameliorating poverty.” This project builds on earlier work, including the Urban Poverty, Economic Development and Cities Project, which provided technical assistance to 12 cities on collaborative team building and strategic planning to reduce poverty.<sup>49</sup>
- On June 26, 2006, former Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee Sen. John Edwards announced a proposal to eliminate U.S. poverty within 30 years. Edwards asserted that poverty is the “great moral issue of our time.” As part of the proposal, he also set an interim target of lifting 12 million Americans—roughly one-third of the currently 37 million who are poor—out of poverty in the next ten years.<sup>50</sup> Edwards, who recently started the Center on Poverty, Work, and Opportunity at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, highlighted a series of measures aimed at achieving a “Working Society.” The measures include raising the minimum wage; creating “stepping stone” jobs; increasing the number of housing vouchers; overhauling the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and advancing educational opportunities for all children, both through making higher education more affordable and through providing more chances for children who drop out of school.<sup>51</sup>
- A commitment to halve child poverty in the United States within ten years is a central feature of a new effort by Sojourners/Call to Renewal, a progressive evangelical Christian organization that has consistently fought to make poverty a moral issue. At their Pentecost conference in June 2006, Sojourners/Call to Renewal released “A Covenant for a New America,” a broad plan to tackle domestic and global poverty, a plan that establishes a domestic poverty target and timeline.<sup>52</sup>
- The Center for American Progress, a progressive think tank in Washington, D.C., announced the project, “Hope, Opportunity, and Mobility for Everyone (HOME): The National Initiative to End Poverty,” in early 2006. The initiative created a task force with the purpose of identifying and developing new solutions to address the problem of poverty. The task force—which consists of a number of the nation’s most prominent policy experts and is directed by Mark Greenberg (who is on leave from the Center for Law and Social Policy where he is Policy Director)—plans to release a report with its recommendations later this year.<sup>53</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Poverty targets signify political commitment. In forming these targets, policymakers must decide a number of questions, including whether to target children or people of all ages; whether to target just chronic or concentrated poverty; what the timeframe will be, and whether there will be an interim target; and whether to try and eliminate poverty, halve it, or reduce it by some other percentage. Yet, regardless of what these decisions are, poverty targets determine the goal. Certainly there will be disagreements about which policy solutions can hit the target. But with targets these policy decisions are made in a more useful context, a context in which the aim is set and the political will to hit the bulls-eye has been established.

### WHAT'S YOUR TARGET?

If you know of a city or state effort to set a poverty target that is not included in **Targeting Poverty: Aim at a Bull's Eye**, please contact the Center for Law and Social Policy. We are interested not only in poverty targets that have been approved but also in poverty targets that are under consideration. CLASP expects to revise **Targeting Poverty: Aim at a Bull's Eye** as new developments emerge. Contact: [jodie@clasp.org](mailto:jodie@clasp.org)

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Also in the Senate, while not focused on targets, a Republican Poverty Alleviation Agenda was announced March 2, 2005. "Senator Santorum Rolls Out Senate Republican Poverty Alleviation Plan." [http://santorum.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressOffice.View&ContentRecord\\_id=1115&Region\\_id=0&Issue\\_id=0](http://santorum.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressOffice.View&ContentRecord_id=1115&Region_id=0&Issue_id=0)

<sup>2</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts. "Growing Number Sees U.S. Divided Between 'Haves' and 'Have-Nots'; Katrina Relief Effort Raises Concern Over Excessive Spending, Waste." 19 Oct 2005. <http://www.pewtrusts.org/>. Stanford University. "Katrina Did Not Raise Awareness of Poverty, Study Finds." 8 March 2006. <http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/2006/march8/katrina-030806.html>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2005." August 29, 2006. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/acs-02.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Catholic Campaign for Human Development. "Poverty Pulse, Wave VI." Jan 2006. [http://www.usccb.org/cchd/PovertyPulse\\_06.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/cchd/PovertyPulse_06.pdf). Other polls have found that a growing share of Americans believe their futures will be worse. The share grew to 21 percent from about 13 percent between 2000 and 2006. <http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/2001-01-17-econ-poll.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Trumbull, Mark. "New Treasury Head Eyes Rising Inequality." *The Christian Science Monitor*. 3 Aug 2006. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0803/p03s03-usec.html>

<sup>6</sup> Schmitt, John and Ben Zipperer. "Is the U.S. a Good Model for Reducing Social Exclusion in Europe?" Center for Economic and Policy Research. July 2006

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Development Programme. "Promoting National Initiatives to Empower the Poor." 2006. <http://www.undp.org/poverty/>

<sup>8</sup> The overall poverty rate in the United States also is higher than in any other OECD nation except Mexico. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. "Social and Welfare Statistics." 2005. [http://www.oecd.org/document/24/0,2340,en\\_2825\\_497118\\_2671576\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1.00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/24/0,2340,en_2825_497118_2671576_1_1_1_1.00.html)

<sup>9</sup> UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. "Child Poverty in Rich Country's 2005." 2005. <http://www.unicef.org/brazil/repcard6a.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> National League of Cities/ Poverty Reduction Strategy Project citing *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty-first Century* (2001), Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom [http://www.nlc.org/resources\\_for\\_cities/programs\\_services/304.cfm](http://www.nlc.org/resources_for_cities/programs_services/304.cfm)

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## CLASP RESOURCES ON POVERTY AND OPPORTUNITY

### **Targeting Poverty: Aim at a Bull's Eye**

Forty years after the war on poverty and a year after Katrina, commitments to tackle poverty are beginning to come back onto political and policy agendas. This **report** identifies efforts around the nation to set numerical goals and timelines for the reduction or elimination of poverty. Among the reasons why poverty may be gaining attention is the increasing concern among many Americans that at some point they and their families may experience poverty. [clasp.org/publications/targetingpovertytakingaimatabullseye10\\_06.pdf](http://clasp.org/publications/targetingpovertytakingaimatabullseye10_06.pdf)

### **Poverty and Opportunity: Developments around the Nation**

Poverty and solutions to it are now on the radar screen. The presidential candidates are beginning to talk about it; state legislatures are passing bills that target it with timelines and numerical goals; and reports are coming out that show it's not intractable. This **audio conference** features Jodie Levin-Epstein of CLASP, Mike Ettlinger of EARN/the Economic Policy Institute, and state Sen. Doug Racine of Vermont. The conversation focuses on emerging ideas from around the country and on some of the key themes of the recent Center for American Progress poverty report. [clasp.org/audio/080107.m3u](http://clasp.org/audio/080107.m3u)

### **Setting Child Poverty Targets: A Commissioner's View on Why Targets Help**

Pat Wilson-Coker, the former commissioner of Connecticut's Department of Social Services, thinks highly of the state's law that established a child poverty target. She worked under it and thinks it helped focus energy across agencies on fighting child poverty. Connecticut aims to reduce child poverty by 50 percent between 2004 and 2014. Wilson-Coker outlines the positive effects of targets on accountability, partnerships, and planning. And the **conversation** highlights the basic choice states have between crisis management and addressing root causes with plans for comprehensive change. A great tool to take to other commissioners and state policy stakeholders. [clasp.org/audio/020607.m3u](http://clasp.org/audio/020607.m3u)

### **The Commitment to End Child Poverty: Developments in the U.K. & U.S.**

In 1999, the U.K. pledged to cut child poverty by one-fourth by 2004 and eliminate it by 2020. In the U.S., Sen. Kennedy has introduced a measure that seeks to halve child poverty; some localities are looking at government initiatives that may include targets. This **audio conference** highlights the politics behind the U.K. initiative, what has been accomplished to date, and expectations for the future; and it features U.S. officials contemplating or implementing initiatives around the country. [clasp.org/audio/061606.m3u](http://clasp.org/audio/061606.m3u)

### **Forgotten Families: An Interview with Author Dr. Jody Heymann**

Parents have to balance the often impossible demands of earning a living with those of raising healthy, cared-for children. This **interview** is with Dr. Jody Heymann, who created Global Working Families to find out how families fare when parents work. Her research reveals the difficult truth that parents in Baltimore are more likely to leave their children home alone sick all day than parents in Vietnam are. In her latest book, *Forgotten Families*, Heymann asserts that only by embracing truly global solutions can we improve the lives of working families everywhere. [clasp.org/audio/051206/051206.m3u](http://clasp.org/audio/051206/051206.m3u)

### **Notes on Poverty**

From Opportunity at Work, CLASP's job quality initiative. This miniseries of **blog posts** highlights poverty developments over the last few months. The series includes updates on state and local poverty discussions, as well as on the emergence of poverty as an issue in the 2008 presidential race. [blog.clasp.org/opportunityatwork/notes\\_on\\_poverty/index.html](http://blog.clasp.org/opportunityatwork/notes_on_poverty/index.html)